REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)*	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED *(From - To)*
31-03-2010	Master of Military Studies Research Paper	September 2009 - April 2010

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
The Market, the Military, and a Dynasty: Insurgency Potential in North Korea

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
N/A

5b. GRANT NUMBER
N/A

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
N/A

6. AUTHOR(S)
Erik Makowsky

5d. PROJECT NUMBER
N/A

5e. TASK NUMBER
N/A

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
N/A

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
USMC Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Quantico, VA 22134-5068

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
N/A

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
N/A

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
N/A

11. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER
N/A

12. DISTRIBUTION AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
N/A

14. ABSTRACT
North Korea's Kim Chong-il regime continues to be capable of controlling the country's population through its repressive and intrusive internal security forces, despite the empowerment of the country's general population through the growth of the market and erosion of the state's command economy. This population control, and China and South Korea's unwillingness to support regime change, will prevent the North Korean people from conducting a successful insurgency against the regime.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
North Korea, Kim Chong-il, insurgency, economy, Korean Peoples' Army, revolution, internal stability, succession process, Kim Jong-un, security forces, market, corruption, bribery

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE	UU	33	Marine Corps University / Command and Staff College
Unclass	Unclass	Unclass			19b. TELEPONE NUMBER *(Include area code)* (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office)

United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:
The Market, the Military, and a Dynasty:
Insurgency Potential in North Korea

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

AUTHOR:
Erik Makowsky

AY 09-10

Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member: Bruce Bechtol, Jr, PhD
Approved: _____
Date: 31 March 2010

Oral Defense Committee Member: Douglas Streusand, PhD
Approved: _____
Date: 31 March 2010

Executive Summary

Title: The Market, the Military, and a Dynasty: Insurgency Potential in North Korea

Author: Erik Makowsky, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Thesis: The Kim Jong-il regime continues to retain sufficient control over the country and its people in order to prevent a successful insurgency, despite its poor handling of the country's dire economic situation that is the source of significant grievances held by North Korean citizens and an unsettled succession process.

Discussion: There has been much speculation regarding North Korea's leadership succession process and the continuation of the longest duration hereditary dictatorial state in the world in the wake of Kim Jong-il's stroke August 2008, to include the potential for regime collapse. The succession process is difficult in that Kim must both address daily internal and external challenges to his power as well as focusing on his long-term strategy for continuing the dynasty. One important internal challenge for Kim is maintaining his regime's control over the population to deter an insurgency. Kim enjoys little support from the people because of the degradation of the social contract between the people and the state following the devolution of the country in the 1990s. This devolution resulted from the country's loss of the Soviet Union as its main sponsor, poor agricultural management practices, the breakdown of the public distribution system, and subsequent famine. As a survival mechanism during the Arduous March of the 1990s, the people resorted to creating the market as an alternative to the failed command economy. This market has been successful in the 15 years since in enabling the people to earn wages, but for this same reason has come to be viewed as a threat by the regime. It is this income, and the monetization of the economy, that has facilitated the continued degeneration of the regime's control through bribery and corruption. The regime most recently responded to this threat at the end of 2009 through broader restrictions on the market and currency devaluation that were designed to severely weaken it and destroy the wealth that many North Koreans had built, respectively, and to prod people to return to their jobs within the state's industries. These harsh regime policies, and the attack on the people they represent, suggest that the regime may be concerned that some North Koreans might be gaining enough strength to take up arms as part of an insurgency to overthrow the regime.

Conclusion: Although North Korea is a highly militaristic society with relatively good access to weapons and materiel, the regime's security forces are sufficiently loyal and intrusive to deter a people's insurgency. In addition, any insurgency that might develop is likely to be contained, because communications and movement are highly controlled by the state.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

Table of Contents

Page

Preface

For at least the last six years the United States has been embroiled in conflicts that can be defined as irregular warfare or counter-insurgency fights. For this reason, the military and others associated with security strategy have focused on Iraq and Afghanistan in order to develop effective counter-insurgency efforts. There are even some who have claimed that state-state regular warfare is a relic of the past, and that the irregular fight will be the premier challenge facing the US over the long-term. Although this assertion has some merit, the US continues to face traditional security threats: North Korea is one.

In North Korea, the Kim regime has staked its legitimacy to rule on the basis of Kim Il-sung's exploits as a guerrilla unit leader who fought against the Japanese during the 1930s. In fact, North Korean propagandists posit that Kim was the only leader of the Korean anti-Japanese movement and erased from state records any mention of other Korean guerrilla groups of the time so as to not marginalize the Great Leader's legacy. It is this propaganda that fills North Korean textbooks and propagates the myth of the Kim family's destiny to rule and of their great guerrilla heritage.

As of early 2010, the Kim regime was facing serious challenges in its rule of the country, and perhaps its direst situation since the so-called Arduous March of 15 years ago. Some of these challenges included: Kim Jong-il's poor health and need to groom a successor; maintaining the country's one-million-man military; and the growing social and economic power of the country's grass-roots market economy. In evaluating this situation, under what circumstances might the regime find itself battling an insurgency in the form of revolution? Where is the tipping-point between peaceful, if not repressive, coexistence between the regime and the people, and violence? As they did during the colonial years, will and how would North Koreans rise up against their rulers?

Much guidance and assistance for this research project was provided to me by personnel of a number of organizations inside and out of the US Government. These include the staff of the US Director of National Intelligence's North Korea Mission Manager office, to include Syd Seiler, Ash Ormes, Bill Brown, and Mauricio De La Cruz; John Merrill, US Department of State; Marcus Nolan from the Peterson Institute for International Economics; Kirk Larsen of Brigham Young University; Brigadier General Mary Legere and Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Sweet, US Army Intelligence and Security Command; and Dr. Bruce Bechtol, Jr., my mentor at the US Marine Corps Command and Staff College. Finally, I must acknowledge my employing agency, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, for providing me the opportunity to attend the US Marine Corps' Command and Staff College and my family, for their love and patience with me throughout the process.

Introduction

In August 2008, North Korea's "Dear Leader," Kim Jong-il, suffered a stroke that initially left him debilitated and kicked off a succession process that has long been anticipated by the outside world. In foreign intelligence communities, governments, and media much debate has followed regarding who would succeed Kim, with some speculating that the elite members of the country were aligning under different candidates to gain favor and maintain their positions.[1] Although Kim has generally recovered and the succession process has since quieted, the regime continues to struggle with the country's severe political, economic, and societal issues. Most recently in November and December 2009, the regime announced harsh restrictions on the market system that developed following the country's famine and economic decline of the 1990s, leading some citizens to actively protest against the regime. Meanwhile, the country's "Military First" policy lends invaluable military backing for Kim's position as the country's leader, but also demands that scarce state resources be diverted to maintain it.[2] In international diplomacy, both the United States and particularly South Korea have become less accommodating to the regime in recent years. The election of a conservative South Korean president in 2008 has led to the reversal of many of his predecessors' "Sunshine Policy" aid packages and unwillingness to provide the North with much-needed aid without demonstrating progress on restricting its nuclear weapons program. The US has had its attention on its own domestic economic situation and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and has only focused on North Korea when the regime acts out aggressively, such as missile launches and nuclear weapon testing.[3]

In entering the new decade, the Kim regime faces serious internal and external challenges, particularly in posturing for the continuation of the Kim dynasty, which has been the world's longest lasting dictatorship at 60 years, under Kim's youngest son, Kim Jong-un, the so-called "Young General of Mount Paektu."[4] This challenge is even more pressing given Kim Jong-il's uncertain health and advancing age and the delicate balancing act of internal and external stressors that the regime must conduct. In the context of these many challenges and pressures, under what circumstances would the North Korean populace turn to violent action, namely insurgency, against either the current or succeeding regime? What lessons can be learned from previous Korean insurgencies, to include the anti-Japanese guerrilla operations during the colonial period before World War II and North Korean guerrilla operations in South Korea during the Korean War and the 1960s? Against the ideological backdrop of North Korea's revolutionary spirit, to include Kim Il-sung's wartime feats as the legitimacy for the Kim dynasty to rule, does the country still have the means and will to conduct such operations? This paper will argue that, although North Korean citizens continue to face considerable hardships, many at the hands of the regime, an insurgency against the regime is unlikely to succeed.

Insurgency Theory

Insurgency is not simply random violence; it is directed and focused violence aimed at achieving a political objective.[5] In the case of North Korea, and for purposes of this thesis, this objective is to overthrow the constituted government through both subversion and armed conflict.[6] It is legitimate political power that is the central goal of the insurgent. In general, the people must be won over and the existing government

discredited to succeed. US Army Field Manual 3-24 suggests that insurgencies are shaped by several common dynamics, to include leadership, objectives, ideology and narrative, environment and geography, external support and sanctuaries, and phasing and timing.[7]

North Korean insurgency potential can be first evaluated through the use of several insurgency theories, namely those of Carl von Clausewitz and Mao Tse Tung. Clausewitz examined the concept of insurgency following the defeat of a country's military through regular warfare. In this case, he defined the conditions necessary for the country's people to continue the fight through irregular warfare (insurgency) against a foreign occupier, but not what conditions might be relevant to people rising up against a domestic ruler. His theories are still useful in evaluating North Korea because he identified several conditions necessary for insurgent warfare. Mao was focused on insurgency as rebellion, making his theories very relevant to an examination of North Korea's insurgency potential.

In the 1800s, Clausewitz, a Prussian military theorist, described his thoughts on insurgency potential in his "The People in Arms" chapter of *On War*. Although it was principally a theoretical exercise because Clausewitz himself had only participated in regular warfare and there had been few western insurgencies to study during his time, he identified five main factors enabling an insurgency. Specifically:

1. The war must be fought in the interior of the country;
2. It must not be decided by a single stroke;
3. The theater of operations must be fairly large;
4. The national character must be suited to that type of war;
5. The country must be rough and inaccessible, because of mountains, or forests, marshes, or the local methods of cultivation.[8]

In essence, Clausewitz asserted that there had to be both the will and the geography to launch a successful insurgency.

Mao Tse Tung, who read Clausewitz's book and also had the benefit of leading a successful insurgency in China in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, refined these factors. Mao, like Clausewitz, saw war as an extension of politics, and saw guerrilla warfare as one aspect of total war in a revolutionary struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor. Mao stated that "[guerrilla operations] are the inevitable result of the clash between oppressor and oppressed when the latter reach the limits of their endurance."[9] Mao stressed the importance of leveraging the peoples' grievances against their rulers and made clear that the insurgent must link their ideology to the goals of the people. Mao deviated from Clausewitz in defining a requirement of insurgent leadership to provide education and ideological training to indoctrinate their followers.

Mao also established the concept of insurgencies having three major phases. These phases included strategic defense, strategic stalemate, and strategic counteroffensive.[10] In the first phase, the insurgency focuses on the organization, consolidation, and preservation of regional base areas situated in isolated and difficult terrain.[11] During this phase the insurgency seeks to build its membership and support base through education and propaganda. In phase two, the effort expands through violent subversive acts and operations. These operations are intended to procure arms, ammunition, and other materiel, and the destruction of enemy infrastructure.[12] These efforts are meant to put the enemy on the defensive, and sap his energies.[13] In phase three, the destruction of the enemy is sought. In this phase insurgents actively seek out and aim to destroy enemy forces, typically through regular warfare.[14]

In addition to reviewing insurgency theory pertinent to North Korea, several types of collapse scenarios and a variety of end states for North Korea should be evaluated. In the North Korean context, it is useful to consider scenarios that are based on comparisons to other Communist states that collapsed at the end of the Cold War, as they provide the most similar patterns. The focus of this paper is on the idea of a failed regime, vice a failed state. Dr. Andrew Scobell has suggested that "regime" refers to "how a state's political power is organized," while a "state" is defined as "a political entity that is recognized as having the sole legitimate authority over a geographic area.[15] A state is responsible for the basic safety and welfare of the inhabitants of this area, including protection from both foreign and domestic threats."[16] Therefore a failed regime is one in which the country remains (and many of its governmental departments), but the leadership is replaced, such as what occurred in Poland or Romania.[17] A failed state, on the other hand, includes both the collapse of the regime and the collapse of the country, with East Germany and the Soviet Union being prime examples.[18] Intermediate forms of collapse can exist, as a regime can be said to be failing, failed, or collapsed. In these instances, a failing regime is becoming increasingly disorganized, while a failed regime is extremely disorganized, with some aspects ceasing to function, while others continue. A collapsed regime occurs when its political power and structure has entirely evaporated.[19]

North Korea's government can be best described as dictatorial, despite its Communist roots. Kim Il-sung and his family established itself as the country's leadership base, and is based on a personality cult, with worship of the state and worship of the family being one and the same, and the promotion of indoctrination, xenophobia, and paranoia amongst the people to discourage discussion of alternative forms of

government. As a result of the severe internal challenges North Korea faced during the 1990s, a possible modification of this style of government has occurred, resulting in something that could be considered "post-dictatorial," which refers to the significant erosion of a dictator's control over the people.[20] Evidence for "post-dictatorial" includes the birth of the market and infiltration of alternative (non-state sanctioned) media.

Dr. Scobell proposed five possible collapse trajectories for North Korea: suspended animation; soft landing; crash landing; and two hybrid scenarios combining some of these possibilities (soft landing/crash landing hybrid and suspended animation/soft landing hybrid).[21] Scobell judged that North Korea was most likely to result in a hybrid suspended animation/soft landing, similar to Cuba, although this could ultimately result in crash.[22] A crash landing is likely to be messy, with civil war or significant armed resistance developing.[23] As he stated in March 2008 – prior to Kim Jong-il's heath crisis - the process of the collapse of the Pyongyang regime has already begun.[24] This process has initiated because of the significant changes to the country that have occurred over the past 15 years, which has led to a decline in the power of the regime. To aid in our detection of regime collapse, Scobell asserts that five key indicators that bear watching closely are: trends in elite politics, the trajectory of economic reform, defense policy, ideology and information control, and foreign policy.[25]

Robert Collins, a retired US Army master sergeant and advisor to US military forces in South Korea, has suggested that North Korea's regime stability can be generally categorized into seven collapse stages. These stages begin with resource depletion (1), which then leads to a failure to maintain infrastructure around the country (2), the rise of independent fiefs informally controlled by local party leaders or warlords along with

widespread corruption to circumvent a failing central government (3), the attempted suppression of these fiefs when the regime deems them dangerous (4), active resistance against the central government (5), the fracture of the regime (6), and finally the formation of a new government (7).[26] As of the Fall of 2006, Collins believed that North Korea had reached stage four (suppression of fiefs) during the troubled 1990s, but had stabilized back at stage three (rise of fiefs). Following Kim's health crisis in August 2008, and more importantly, the implementation of aggressive restrictions on the markets, he judged that North Korea had moved back into stage four.[27]

Background - The North Korean Case

An evaluation of North Korea's insurgency potential may be determined from two principle factors. This paper argues that the role of the military and the intrusion of the market in the country are fundamental to determining this potential. First, the role and history of the Korean Peoples' Army (KPA) in the founding of North Korea and its relationship to the government must be examined. Second, the birth and subsequent reliance of the market – in effect, the shift away from a command economy – has split the people from the state, opening a dangerous schism that the regime struggles to contain. For Kim Jong-il, much of his energy must be spent on maintaining his dominance over the state, fostering the acceptance of his son as his heir, satisfying the military's resource requirements, and parrying his adversaries' designs against him.

To understand the significance of these two factors for insurgency potential, North Korea as a country must be framed, particularly in terms of the regime's primacy in government, the role of the military to the regime, and the intrusiveness of the government into citizens' lives. The North Korean government has always included Kim

Il-sung (later Kim Jong-il) as its leader and supported by a balance between the military, the Korean Workers' Party (KWP), and state apparatus. Kim Il-sung eliminated all independent political and social organizations as he consolidated his power in the 1950s, which has prevented organized opposition movements.[28] Under Kim Il-sung's leadership, North Korea adopted the ideals of juche, while maintaining a Stalinist form (dictatorship) of Communism. Juche can be translated as "self-reliance," but includes nationalism, Stalinism, and Confucian dynasticism.[29] It is this ideology that dominates what is "North Korean," and often dictates the regime's actions.

The role and importance of the KPA in North Korean government grew significantly during Kim Jong-il's transition to power, to the exclusion of the KWP and state apparatus. Kim enacted the "Military First" policy during the turbulent 1990s as a means of insuring he had a loyal and strong power base by making it the priority recipient for the country's scarce resources. This policy has given the military cover to abuse the civilian population by both commandeering foreign food aid intended for the civilian population to outright theft of farmers' produce.[30] In addition, the KPA has both the manpower and logistics system to collect and distribute these resources and manipulate the economy.[31]

The KPA's raison d'être is to reunify the Korean peninsula under the Kim regime, and this purpose has long been central to the regime's legitimacy to rule. So long as Kim is able to maintain the appearance that the military can carry out this task, than KPA leadership should lend their support to the regime. Kim often demonstrates his focus on supporting the military through his actions. In a nod to appeasing the military, by 2009 all instances of the word "communism" in the North Korean constitution were removed and

replaced with "Military First," solidifying this policy.[32] Kim Jong-il has made frequent inspections of KPA units following his stroke, to include state media reports of various drills. State reports in early 2010 have made mention of KPA firepower demonstrations, armor maneuvers, and multi-service drills.[33] What is unusual about these activities is not that the military conducted them, but that the normally very secretive country reported them in their media. This suggests that the regime may be concerned about the impression of KPA military strength for both internal and external consumption. For the former, it highlights Kim's interest in the military, and provides evidence that the KPA is still a strong combat force capable of protecting the state from aggressors and reunifying the peninsula.

Kim Jong-il's declining health is of concern to the regime and those who support and benefit from his rule because it potentially serves as an opening for a change in power, to include insurgency. Rumors have long abounded about Kim Jong-il's health and the succession process, but little conclusive evidence regarding his health issues was available until he had a stroke in August 2008. No pictures of Kim were published in the North Korean press for several months after the event, and when they finally were, Kim appeared to be frail and favoring his left arm.[34] Numerous reports during this period indicated that Kim had initiated a succession process, with his youngest son, Kim Jong-un, being the likely candidate.[35] Kim evidently was able to largely recover, and during his August 2009 meeting with former US President Bill Clinton he appeared to be coherent and in good spirits.[36]

Kim's selection of his youngest son as his successor potentially opens the regime to a power struggle. Kim Jong-un almost certainly would require significant assistance

and mentoring by trusted elites in order to continue the dynasty because he is only in his mid-20s. From a transition standpoint, the more time Kim Jong-il has to prepare his son for leadership, the more likely the transition will succeed. Kim Jong-il was groomed for his position for 20 years.[37] Additionally help for Kim Jong-un, particularly if his father were to die soon, could come from uncle, Chang Song-taek, or other senior members of the country's principle authoritative body, the National Defense Commission. This body or one of its members could serve as a regent while continuing to develop Kim Jong-un for power, although it is unclear if they might try to marginalize Kim to a figurehead status by building support among the country's elites.[38] Such a status is likely necessary to ensure the ruler's legitimacy, given the historic role of the Kim family as the true leaders of the country.

The final factor in the maintenance of the regime in keeping its power comes from the country's security services. North Korea has long maintained strict control over its citizens and government organizations through overlapping and intrusive security services. The nature of these services enables the state to tightly monitor the activities of its citizens, and serves as a natural extension of the paranoia it fosters. These forces are split between the state's major organizations, to include the Ministry of Public Security, the Security Command, and the State Security Department.[39] These entities ensure that all North Koreans are under the scrutiny of the state, and also provide checks against each other. The importance of these services in preventing the development of an insurgency is critical.

North Korean Insurgency History

The most powerful and largest North Korean government organization is the KPA, and it is this entity that provides Kim Jong-il with his most important power base. The KPA was founded in 1948 with significant Soviet support, but the regime has long associated it with Kim Il-sung's anti-Japanese Korean guerrilla organization of the colonial period for legitimacy purposes.[40] In truth, Kim's exploits were largely unknown by most of his countrymen following the end of World War II. The regime has instead used Kim's efforts as the basis for propaganda to inspire the people in the anti-imperialist ways of the anti-Japanese guerrillas, and encourage the role of insurgency as a means of establishing power. [41]

North Korean insurgency potential can be traced to the period between 1910 and 1945, while the country was subjected to Imperial Japanese colonial rule. The Japanese utilized the Korean peninsula as a source of national resources and manufacturing, with its people operating these mines and factories. The Japanese were brutal and oppressive rulers who sought to obliterate Korean heritage, culture, and language. These hardships drove some Koreans to form guerrilla bands to fight the Japanese, but these groups were fractured along ideological lines, to include nationalist and communist camps. The groups did not have great success as the Japanese were generally successful in rooting them out and driving them north to safe havens in Manchuria, China, and the Soviet Union.

World War II concluded without much Korean involvement. Kim Il-sung and his unit had fled to the Soviet Union early in the war, where the Soviets reorganized them but withheld from operations in Korea. The Soviets probably withheld these forces to prevent

the guerrillas from taking control of Korea following the defeat of Japan in order to better shape the post-war Korean government.

With the division of the Korean peninsula following World War II, the rival northern and southern factions, supported by their superpower-supporters, sought to govern a reunified country. The US pushed for a nominally democratic form of government in the south under Syngman Rhee, while the Soviet Union promoted a communist regime in the north under Kim Il-sung. Countrywide elections to unify the country under one form of government failed to materialize in 1948, but both sides continued to posture to forcefully absorb the other.

North Korea planned to utilize regular and irregular warfare to reunify the peninsula when they invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950. Kim had coordinated with his Communist party counterpart in the south to initiate a supporting guerrilla fight, but substantially fewer partisans rose up than was expected or needed.[42] As a result of this failure and US military support to the south, the KPA was unable to consolidate their territorial gains and drive the enemy off the peninsula at Pusan. North Korean leadership had overestimated the potential for supporting guerrilla forces in South Korea.

In analyzing the lessons of the Korean War, the North identified the need to develop a more holistic strategy for reunification. Such a strategy had three elements, including the creation of a military-industrial base, subverting the US-South Korea alliance, and liberating South Korea through insurgency.[43] The North initiated the latter effort through political subversion in the early 1960s, but found little traction among the South Korean population. The lack of success through relatively nonviolent means was replaced by active guerrilla warfare between July 1967 and July 1969.[44] North Korea

intended this effort to destabilize and precipitate the collapse of the South Korean government by direct confrontation, to drive a wedge between South Korea and the US, to discourage foreign and domestic investment in the south, weaken the general confidence of the South Korean government, establish and support a KWP in the south, and create and environment favorable for a popular uprising.[45]

This timeframe was punctuated by a series of bold, violent North Korean actions against the South, but failed to further the overall cause. These efforts included the failed January 1968 Blue House raid during which a North Korean commando team attempted to assassinate South Korean President Park Chung-hee.[46] Although the Blue House raid failed, it did not dissuade the North from further efforts. Between October and December 1968, North Korean commando teams infiltrated South Korea to subvert the populace of several isolated villages, revolutionize the townspeople, and establish a military intelligence network before returning north.[47] These soldiers utilized a variety of means, to include political indoctrination, threats, and bribery. On a few occasions, terror tactics were used, to include public executions.[48] Overall, these efforts were not well received, and South Korean villagers quickly informed local authorities who drove the infiltrators from the South.[49]

North Korea's revolutionary efforts in the South during the 1960s failed because they fundamentally misunderstood South Korean political, economic, and social conditions. The South's economy was rapidly developing and the populace was weary of war and its hardships. In addition, South Korean anti-Communist and counter-insurgency efforts had been improved and events of the 1960s demonstrated that they were capable of countering the North's efforts to promote insurgency and revolution.[50] In the face of

these shortcomings, North Korea abandoned their insurgency efforts against the South and turned to diplomatic efforts and more conventional military means.[51]

As the succession process began between Kim Il-sung and his son, Kim Jong-il, in the 1970s, North Korea shifted from it past insurgency efforts to terrorist acts designed to obtain concessions from the south. These terrorist acts included the October 1983 bombing of a South Korean government delegation in Rangoon, Myanmar (Burma) and the November 1987 bombing of Korean Airlines Flight 858. Neither of these actions obtained the desired political concessions, and instead brought international condemnation. North Korea has avoided such overt terrorist actions since, but acts of brinksmanship, such as the launching of the Taepodong-1 and Taepodong-2 missiles over Japan in 1998 and 2009, respectively, and the detonation of nuclear devices in 2006 and 2009, continue to demonstrate the north's willingness to use extreme measures to garner favorable results.

Discussion

"Corporate knowledge"

North Korean ideology has long promoted the role of the revolutionary, guerrilla-style conflict and the ever-present threat of imperialism. As a result, North Korea has made a concerted effort to ensure that its people are trained and indoctrinated to perform this type of warfare. It is precisely this indoctrination and training that could enable North Koreans to stage an insurgency against the regime.

The potential for North Koreans to stage an insurgency is first dependent upon their access to weapons and second upon their ability to use them effectively. In December 1962, Kim Il-sung announced his "Four Military Lines" decree for national

security policy that called for arming the populace, fortifying the nation, making each soldier a cadre, and introducing modern arms.[52] Of these "lines," the country's need to arm the populace and make every soldier a cadre risk building a population capable of insurgency. Conscription applies to both men and women in North Korea, with ten- and seven-year service periods, respectively.[53] The duration of this duty provides North Koreans with a long timeframe in which to become indoctrinated and trained to fight. For internal security purposes, this conscription period isolates potentially the most dangerous population for the regime – males 18 to 28 years old – and places them outside their home province where they enjoy few societal connections.[54] Following their active-duty assignments, many of these personnel are assigned to militia or reserve units, where they continue to receive training and have access to weapons.

Although the KPA is estimated to consist of one million personnel, or about 5% of the country's population, it is the militia and reserve forces that significantly bolster its warfighting endurance.[55] These forces are believed to include approximately 7.7 million personnel, or 30 percent of the country's population between the ages of 15 and 60.[56] These forces include the Reserve Military Training Units, Worker and Peasant Red Guard, Red Youth Guard, and other Paramilitary Units.[57] These forces draw their arms from depots scattered throughout the country, both rural and urban, potentially giving a large portion of the country's population access to arms, particular in an insurgency scenario.

North Korea's emphasis on maintaining one of the largest special operations forces (SOF) in the world provides it with an extremely capable force to conduct insurgency operations. As of 1998, the US Intelligence Community estimated that North

Korean SOF numbered at least 100,000.[58] These troops are believed to include the Light Infantry Training Guidance Bureau, the Reconnaissance Bureau, Air Force SOF, Naval SOF, and Corps and Division-level SOF.[59] According to more recent South Korean government numbers these forces may have grown to 180,000 since 1998, with the formation of light infantry divisions and expansion of division-level SOF units to regiments from battalions.[60] SOF could well be the most lethal and effective insurgency force, as one of their primary missions is to foster the growth of guerrilla forces behind enemy lines.[61] Among the SOF threats and methods US Forces-Korea command was planning for in 2008 were the use of improvised explosive devices and other tactics adopted from observing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.[62]

In reviewing Clausewitz's forecasts regarding the potential for insurgency, a country must have appropriate terrain to fight on and survive in, specifically that the country must be rough and inaccessible. The Korean peninsula features excellent terrain for guerrilla-type operations in that it is mountainous, with restricted terrain for mechanized movement. In November 1970, Kim Il-sung stated:

> "Our country has many mountains and rivers, and has long seacoasts. In the terrain of a country such as ours, if one takes good advantage of this kind of terrain, carrying out mountain and night combat with skill, and correctly applying combinations of large scale warfare and small scale warfare, regular and irregular combat, even in the case of an enemy who is armed to the fingertips with the latest military technology, we can do a good job of annihilating him."[63]

It is this terrain, coupled to a militarized population, which may put the regime at risk of insurgency.

North Korea's Economy

The death of North Korea's communist command economy occurred in the turbulent 1990s, following the loss of their main sponsor as the Soviet Union dissolved,

Kim Il-sung's death in 1994, industrial decay, the collapse of the public distribution system (PDS), and the Arduous March – a period of widespread famine in the country in the mid- and late-1990s. North Koreans demonstrated themselves to be hardy and adaptive, and the survivors devised new means of economic support. Mostly importantly, this timeframe gave rise of the market, and in turn increased the role and value of currency. The market has grown strong over the past decade, and what was initially tolerated by the regime has become the source of much concern. The angst that has resulted, despite leading to a series of recent government crackdowns and restrictions on the market, has not been easily resolved. Instead, regime efforts to clamp down on the market, and the empowerment it provides common North Koreans, could lead to a divide between the regime and the people significant enough to overflow into insurgency.

The hardships endured by North Koreans during the 1990s, and the survival mechanisms they developed as a result of their abandonment by the regime, likely led to the formation of a population that includes citizens who benefited and profited from the emergence of the market – potentially a new power elite. An example of their growing strength may be derived from public protests against state-implemented currency devaluation in December 2009.[64] This government action, because it included confiscatory limits on the ability of citizens to convert their currency holdings, was especially taxing on those who had accumulated large sums of money (i.e. those engaged in market activities).[65] There has also been widespread reporting of a new entrepreneurial class who use bribes on low-level Pyongyang officials to thrive.[66] As part of the government crackdown, the KWP newspaper, the Rodong Sinmun, published that capitalism is a "honey-coated poison" as one explanation for the restrictions.[67] These

restrictions have included the banning of marketplace merchants to only women over 40 years old and strict limits on market operating hours.[68] The United Nations estimates that 50% of calories consumed by North Koreans are from market-purchased food, meaning that the government's restrictions are likely to have a significant impact on the people.[69]

As an alternative to the market, the regime's actions against it are intended to encourage the people to return to the state's industries, where the PDS would provide them with food rations. The reality is that the PDS has been broken since the mid-1990s because the state lacks the food and distribution network required to feed the population. In addition, the state generally lacks the production inputs required to operate the industries it prods the people into returning to. The dilemma then is that the regime has both restricted the country's economic safety valve in market activities, while lacking the resources necessary to reinstitute the command economy. It is the danger of this situation for the regime that potentially risks creating an insurgency against it.

As bad as the economic situation may seem, history suggests that the regime will moderate its recent restrictions, thus reducing the tension it has created. The regime placed restrictions on the market in 2005 and attempted to restart the PDS, however it quickly became apparent to the regime that the PDS was incapable of supporting the people's caloric intake requirements. North Korean government policy regularly follows a "two-steps forward, one-step back" process, which encourages both members of the state and its citizens to minimally comply with these policies or resort to bribery to skirt restrictions.[70]

In the global context, history has shown that economic disaster does not necessarily lead to political collapse.[71] Numerous dictatorships have survived despite

severe economic problems such as hyperinflation, widespread famine, and/or mass unemployment.[72] In addition, famines have not led a population to topple their leadership in the past, such as Stalin during collectivization in the 1920s and Mao during the Great Leap Forward in the late 1950s.[73] The example of the Arduous March in North Korea is an even more direct case. The Kim regime benefits from a robust state security system that permeates throughout North Korean society. So long as this system remains loyal to Kim, a significant hurdle remains for any insurgent group.

Although North Korea's social contract between the government and the people was generally destroyed during the hardships of the 1990s, the regime's emphasis on the danger posed by external enemies suggests that the regime has redefined the contract. Specifically, as the regime recognized that it was unable to maintain the command economy and the traditional social contract consisting of daily necessities in exchange for labor, it shifted to the Military First policy with an emphasis on the provision of security against the country's enemies.[74] In effect, the social contract of today is built on the state providing security for the people and the people continuing to support state industries. This measure could have the effect of moderating the people's expectations, and defusing what could be a source of contention and anger against the regime.

Implications

Most North Koreans are not supportive of the Kim regime, particularly following the hardships of the 1990s and their exposure to and reliance on the market. Over the past decade, North Koreans have gained limited access to foreign reporting and communications which has degraded the message of the state. The market, and the corruption and bribery that it fuels, has weakened the regime, particularly as it failed the

people during the 1990s. A failure of legitimacy and the destruction of the state-public social contract could foment the desire for an insurgency among the people. A grass-roots effort that pursued an ideology founded on nationalism, and specifically reflecting the purity of the Korean people built on the ideals of Juche and that placed blame on the regime for its grievances, could provide the necessary backing.

Several major internal and external hurdles stand in the way of this type of insurgency. In terms of internal dynamics, first, there are no social organizations in North Korea outside those of the state, and principally the KWP. This means that there are no organizations for the people to mobilize through. Second, North Koreans have long been restricted to their villages and counties without special government approval. This has the effect of controlling how people exchange information, and limits how far that information can travel. In effect, those inclined toward violent acts against the state are restricted to a small audience. A vanguard espousing ideas against the regime simply lacks the ability to communicate with the masses – a principle condition for insurgency. Third, the state's security forces are omnipresent and permeate into all aspects of North Korean life. So long as these entities remain loyal to the regime, the people lack the cover to plan and conduct any insurgency. Finally, decades of hardship have conditioned the people to accept their lot in life. This conditioning, along with the indoctrination they receive from the state, makes it unlikely that they can envisage an alternative lifestyle.

In examining external factors against an insurgency developing, two countries play key roles. First, China, North Korea's powerful neighbor to the north, does not appear to desire leadership change. In fact, it likely prefers a stable buffer state between it and its adversaries, such as South Korea, the US forces in South Korea, and Japan. The

relationship between China and North Korea has long been referred to one as "lips and teeth," with the two mutually supporting each other.[75] Under this current policy, China is unlikely to provide insurgent groups with a safe haven, as they and the Soviets did during the anti-Japanese struggle.[76] Second, South Korea, who could harbor and otherwise promote an insurgency, seems to lack the political will to do so. North Korea's regime was incensed by the South's allowance of its citizens to launch propaganda-filled balloons into the North in past years. The North's response to a South-sponsored insurgency would likely be war.

Another scenario that might lead to an overthrow of the government could come from some combination of a group of North Korean elites and the KPA. As with a rebellion, this group would require cooperation from state security forces to circumvent the regime's protection. For such a scenario to evolve, it is likely that Kim Jong-il or his successor would need to commit such an egregious political error that there was a loss of faith in his ability to lead, and that the status quo might be in danger. A major military or economic blunder that resulted from an order by Kim Jong-il or his son during the succession process could be one example, because it is likely that the regime would be most vulnerable to internal competition.[77] For the near future, the likelihood of an insurgency by an elite group against the regime is slim while Kim Jong-il still maintains a position of strength.

Although both popular and elite forms of insurgency are unlikely to occur, it is useful to consider events that might reveal that potential for one. Media reports from early February 2010 indicated that the regime had backed off at least some of their market and currency restrictions that were enacted in late-2009, following possible

attacks by citizens against security officials and general discontent.[78] One of the first methods an insurgent uses are attacks against local security elements because they weaken the ability of the state to protect the people. More extreme actions against state personnel or infrastructure, such as assassinations and/or bombings, would offer more compelling evidence of an insurgency. For example, the April 2004 Ryongchon railroad yard explosion in North Korea supposedly came shortly after Kim Jong-il had passed through on his private train. Although many analysts do not regard the event to have been an assassination attempt, it did reflect the makings of one.[79] Assassination could be particularly useful for an elite group, as it could decapitate the regime and prompt a leadership change while preserving the leadership structure: ideal for maintaining the status quo. The movement of KPA combat units into other areas of the country could also be telling of a government counterinsurgency response. Such a move could suggest that serious tension between the regime and the people was brewing and was more substantial than local security forces could handle. In the mid-1990s, such a move is believed to have occurred, when a front-line infantry division was thrust into North Hamgyong Province in the upper northeast of the country following the discovery of anti-regime activities.[80]

North Korea is undoubtedly suffering hard, uncertain times that present unique and pressing internally- and externally-driven challenges upon the regime. The breakdown of the country's centrally-command economy in the 1990s, the development of the market as an alternative, and the regime's continuing failure to redress this situation enables the country's citizens an opportunity to rebel. The state's security forces, with their loyalty to the regime, and the tight restrictions on citizens' mobility puts powerful brakes on any insurgency potential, however. Overall, absent a breakdown in

the reliability of these forces, it appears that the regime is capable of maintaining its grip over the country's population.

Notes

[1] Blaine Harden, June Lee, and Akiko Yamamato, "A Succession Saga Goes Silent," *Washington Post*, September 11, 2009.
[2] Robert Kaplan, "When North Korea Falls," *The Atlantic*, October 2006. http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/10/when-north-korea-falls/5228/ (accessed December 29, 2009).
[3] BBC News, "North Korea Accepts Food Aid From South Korea," *BBC.com*, January 15, 2010. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8461022.stm (accessed January 15 2010).
[4] Andrew Scobell, *Demystifying North Korea. Projecting Pyongyang: The Future of North Korea's Kim Jong Il Regime,* (Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008), x; Harden, "Saga Goes Silent."
[5] Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency* FM 3-24, December 2006 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006), 1-13.
[6] Department of the Army, 1-1.
[7] Department of the Army, 1-13.
[8] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Paret, Peter, (New York: Everyman's Library, Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 579.
[9] Mao Tse Tung, *Mao Tse Tung on Guerrilla Warfare*, Translated by Samuel B. Griffith II, (Baltimore, Maryland: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1992), 69.
[10] Department of the Army. 1-6.
[11] Mao, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 48.
[12] Mao, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 49.
[13] Mao, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 49.
[14] Mao, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 49.
[15] Scobell, *Projecting Pyongyang*, viii.
[16] Scobell, *Projecting Pyongyang*, viii.
[17] Scobell, *Projecting Pyongyang,* 3.
[18] Scobell, *Projecting Pyongyang,* 3.
[19] Scobell, *Projecting Pyongyang*, ix.
[20] Scobell, *Projecting Pyongyang*, 9.
[21] Scobell, *Projecting Pyongyang*, xi.
[22] Scobell, *Projecting Pyongyang*, xii.
[23] Scobell, *Projecting Pyongyang*, 27.
[24] Scobell, *Projecting Pyongyang*, xiii.
[25] Scobell, *Projecting Pyongyang*, xiv.
[26] Kaplan, "When North Korea Falls."
[27] Robert Collins, email message to author, January 16, 2010.
[28] Stephan Haggard and Marcus Nolan, *Famine in North Korea: Markets, Aid, and Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 6.
[29] Haggard, *Famine in North Korea*, 4.
[30] Haggard, *Famine in North Korea*,109; Blaine Harden, "In North Korea, the Military Now Issues Economic Orders," *Washington Post*, November 3, 2009.
[31] Harden, "Economic Orders."
[32] Harden, "Economic Orders."
[33] Chosun Ilbo (English Edition), "N.Korean Tank Unit Stages Mock Invasion," *Chosun.com*, January 8,2010. http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2010/01/08/2010010800767.html, (accessed January 9, 2010; Associated Press, "Kim Jong Il Calls for Stronger N. Korean Army," *FoxNews.com,* January 17, 2010. http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,583207,00.html (accessed January 17, 2010); Chosun Ilbo (English Edition), "Kim Jong-il Attends Massive Military Exercise," *Chosun.com*, January 18, 2010. http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2010/01/18/2010011800314.html (accessed January 18, 2010).
[34] Harden, "Saga Goes Silent."
[35] Kwang-tae Kim, "Report: NKoreans Mark Birthday of Leader's Son," *Washington Post*, January 8, 2010. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/08/AR2010010800561.html?sub=AR (accessed January 12, 2010).

[36] Glenn Kessler, "N. Korea Releases U.S. Journalists," *Washington Post,* August 5, 2009. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/04/AR2009080400684.html (accessed 12 January 2010).
[37] Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, (USA: Basic Books, 2001), 347.
[38] Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr., "Maintaining a Rogue Regime: Kim Jong-il and the North Korean Succession Process," *Korea Economic Institute, Academic Paper Series* (July 2009), 6-7; Philippa Fogarty, "Profile: Chang Song-taek," *BBC.com*, April 21, 2009. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8002562.stm (accessed January 19, 2010).
[39] Joseph S Bermudez, *The Armed Forces of North Korea,* (New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2001), 197-211.
[40] Homer T. Hodge, "North Korea's Military Strategy," *Parameters* (Spring 2003), 77.
[41] Adrian Buzo, *The Guerilla Dynasty: Politics and Leadership in North Korea,*. (Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1999), 19.
[42] Buzo, *Guerilla Dynasty*, 21.
[43] Hodge, "Military Strategy," 76.
[44] Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., *North Korean Special Forces*, (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 69.
[45] Bermudez, *Special Forces*, 70.
[46] Blaine Harden and June Lee, "N. Korea Swiftly Expanding Its Special Forces," *Washington Post*, October 9, 2009.
[47] Bermudez, *Special Forces*, 86.
[48] Bermudez, *Special Forces*, 86.
[49] Bermudez, *Special Forces*, 87.
[50] Bermudez, *Special Forces*, 88.
[51] Hodge, "Military Strategy," 76.
[52] Bermudez, *Special Forces*, 65.
[53] Harden, "Expanding Its Special Forces."
[54] Ash Ormes, Office of Director of National Intelligence, North Korea Mission Manager Chief of Staff, face-to-face interview with author, January 20, 2010.
[55] Melanie Kirkpatrick, "The Weekend Interview with Gen. B.B. Bell: The North Korean Threat," *Wall Street Journal (Eastern Edition)*, February 23, 2008.
[56] Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense, *Defense White Paper 2008,* (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense), 35.
[57] Ministry of National Defense, 35.
[58] Bermudez, *Special Forces*, 7
[59] Bermudez, *Special Forces*, 7; Ministry of National Defense, 35.
[60] Ministry of National Defense, 33.
[61] Bermudez, *Special Forces*, 4.
[62] Jim Garamone, "Command Remains Flexible as North Korean Threat Changes," *USFK Public Affairs Office,* September 29, 2009; Harden, "Expanding Its Special Forces."
[63] Bermudez, *Special Forces*, 96.
[64] Blaine Harden, "North Korea Revalues Currency, Destroying Personal Savings," *Washington Post*, December 2, 2009.
[65] Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, "The Winter of Their Discontent: Pyongyang Attacks the Market," Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2. http://www.piie.com/publications/pb/pb10-01.pdf (accessed January 15, 2010).
[66] Blaine Harden, "In N. Korea, a Strong Movement Recoils at Kim Jong Il's Attempt to Limit Wealth." *Washington Post*, December 27, 2009. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/26/AR2009122600761.html (accessed January 11, 2010).
[67] Harden, "Attempt to Limit Wealth."
[68] Haggard, "Attacks the Market," 4.
[69] Harden, "Attempt to Limit Wealth."
[70] Marcus Nolan, Peterson Institute for International Economics, telephone conversation with author, January 20, 2010.
[71] Scobell, *Projecting Pyongyang*, xi.

[72] Scobell, *Projecting Pyongyang*, xi.
[73] Scobell, *Projecting Pyongyang*, 14.
[74] Syd Seiler, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, North Korean Mission Manager, Deputy, face-to-face interview with author, January 20, 2010.
[75] Scobell, *Projecting Pyongyang*, 35.
[76] Nolan, telephone conversation with author.
[77] John Merrill, US Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, face-to-face interview with author, January 21, 2010.
[78] BBC News. "North Korean Official Sacked Over Currency Chaos" *BBCcom*, February 3, 2010. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8494978.stm (accessed 3 February 2010); BBC News. "North Korea Relaxes Free Market Restrictions" *BBC.com*, February 4, 2010. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8497603.stm (accessed February 4, 2010).
[79] BBC News. "Rumours Linger Over N Korea Blast," *BBC.com*, April 24, 2004. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3652157.stm (accessed 11 February 2010).
[80] Bechtol, "Rogue Regime," 2-3.

Bibliography

Bechtol, Bruce E, Jr, "Maintaining a Rogue Regime: Kim Jong-il and the North Korean Succession Process." *Korea Economic Institute, Academic Paper Series*, July 2009.

Bermudez, Joseph S. *The Armed Forces of North Korea.* New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2001.

Bermudez, Joseph S. *North Korean Special Forces.* Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1998.

Buzo, Adrian. *The Guerilla Dynasty: Politics and Leadership in North Korea.* Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1999.

Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War.* Edited by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.

Haggard, Stephan and Marcus Nolan. *Famine in North Korea: Markets, Aid, and Reform.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Haggard, Stephan and Marcus Noland. "The Winter of Their Discontent: Pyongyang Attacks the Market." Peterson Institute for International Economics, January 2010.

Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Counterinsurgency.* FM 3-24. December 2006. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006.

Hodge, Homer T. "North Korea's Military Strategy." *Parameters*, Spring 2003.

Kaplan, Robert D. "When North Korea Falls." *The Atlantic.* October 2006.

Mao Tse Tung. *Mao Tse Tung on Guerrilla Warfare.* Translated by Samuel B. Griffith II, Baltimore, Maryland: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1992.

Oberdorfer, Don. *The Two Koreas.* USA: Basic Books, 2001.

Republic of Korea, Ministry of National Defense. *Defense White Paper 2008.*

Sanford, John M. and Scobell, Andrew. *Demystifying North Korea. North Korea's Military Threat: Pyongyang's Conventional Forces, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Ballistic Missiles.* Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007.

Scobell, Andrew. *Demystifying North Korea. Projecting Pyongyang: The Future of North Korea's Kim Jong Il Regime*. Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008.